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## RELATION OF CHARITY-ORGANIZATION SOCIETIES TO RELIEF SOCIETIES AND RELIEF-GIVING.

IN order to formulate, if possible, a practicable plan of coöperation between charity-organization societies and relief societies an effort was made to ascertain the relations existing between them in those cities in the United States in which both are found, and also to learn the extent to which the charity-organization societies are accustomed to give relief from their own funds, upon which point there seemed to be some confusion of thought. Questions were sent out, to which replies were received from societies in seventy-five cities. Almost all the more important ones were heard from, and the conclusions based upon their reports may safely be considered as fairly representing all.

With reference to the practice of giving relief from their own funds, fifty-one societies answered in the affirmative and twenty-four<sup>1</sup> in the negative; but an analysis of the reports leads to a modification of these figures.

Such an analysis shows that eight of the twenty-four societies that classify themselves as non-relief-giving provide immediate relief in urgent cases, pending adjustment, either from their general funds or from special funds maintained for that purpose; three others authorize their agents to expend money from their own purses in emergencies, which will be refunded to them by the society from some source; two have a combination of both methods; five in cities of less than 50,000 are indefinite in their answers upon this point; while the remaining seven societies assert that direct relief is procured wholly from outside sources. In two of the seven last mentioned the relation with the relief society is so close as to amount to a consolidation, as in one

<sup>1</sup> These are New York, Boston, Baltimore, Indianapolis, Newark, Providence, Washington, D. C.; Minneapolis, St. Paul, Cambridge, Mass.; Charleston, S. C.; Fort Wayne, Ind.; Hartford, Conn.; New Bedford, Mass.; Lynn, Mass.; La Crosse, Wis.; Malden, Mass.; New Brunswick, N. J.; Salem, Mass.; Terre Haute, Ind.; Grinnell, Ia.; Newburyport, Mass.; Passaic, N. J., and Plainfield, N. J.

instance the secretary of the charity-organization society is also the secretary of the relief society, and in the other instance the two societies occupy the same building, issue joint appeals for money, and publish a joint annual report, while the charity-organization society does all the investigating for both societies, and writes orders for groceries which the relief society pays without question.

Of the remaining five societies that seem clearly to rely upon outside sources, four are in small cities, and all five of them have perfected arrangements by which immediate aid in emergencies will be given by relief societies upon their recommendation without reinvestigation.

Some of the societies have had valuable experiences in connection with relief work, and the views of some general secretaries upon this point will be interesting.

The general secretary in Denver (population 150,000) writes :

I think we can do our work much more efficiently and satisfactorily by having an emergency fund and supplementing it by individual assistance than we could by depending upon a separate relief society, wherein there is always likelihood of a difference of opinion about cases and about methods in general.

The general secretary in Orange, N. J., writes :

Our community is small, 60,000 population ; there was no relief society, and it would have been an egregious error to have tried to organize one. We organize substitutes for relief, and when direct relief is necessary we follow one of two plans : (1) if need is temporary and limited, we use our own funds ; (2) if need is likely to be continuous or is large, we appeal to individuals or through the newspapers.

The general secretary in Portland, Ore. (population 90,000), writes :

The attempt was made in the first place, twelve years ago, to make this strictly a charity-organization society, but a few years in that direction demonstrated the necessity of combining relief work with the other. We have, I think, succeeded in doing this without giving place to the evil effects that are usually supposed to arise from such a combination. Outdoor relief has been greatly diminished, begging practically abolished, and a good degree of coöperation secured among churches, societies, and benevolent individuals. The county commissioners contemplate discontinuing outdoor

relief and have followed our example in requiring work from able-bodied persons asking relief. The situation is not all that could be desired, but improves from year to year.

The general secretary in Worcester, Mass. (population 100,000), writes:

I was trained to believe that the associated charities should never give relief, and came to this city to take up the work "firm in the faith." I found the society giving relief and thought it not wise to make changes until I knew local conditions. After five years' careful study I have come to the following conclusions: (1) We must have some general relief work. (2) It is not wise to run the risk and incur the expense of a separate society for the avowed purpose of giving relief. (3) If aid must be given, the motive for which it is given and the result to the recipients are the points to be considered, and not merely the method by which it is dispensed.

The difference in the attitude of mind toward the subject of relief between some which report themselves in the non-relief-giving class and those which do not is seen in a comparison of the societies in New York and Chicago. New York during the preceding year received and expended a large sum of money as intermediary, and also distributed through its agents several thousand dollars of a special relief fund which was placed in its hands; and when urgent need was found which could not well be supplied from the regular sources organized by the society, the agents were authorized to expend money from their own purses, which was refunded by the society from some source. None of this money was considered as a part of the funds of the society.

The society in Chicago did almost exactly the same thing. It also collected and expended a considerable sum as intermediary, and likewise expended a special relief fund which was placed in its hands; and its agents expended money in emergencies until other sources could be reached. But all of this money was considered as a part of the funds of the society and made up the aggregate of the amount reported as expended for relief. The main difference between the methods of the two societies seems to be a matter of bookkeeping. If comparisons were to be carefully made between many other societies of the two classes, the differences would be found to consist largely of arbitrary classification.

Of those societies that state that they give relief from their own funds thirty-nine are in cities that have no general relief societies and include most of the smaller cities. The remainder of this class, twelve in number, restrict their relief, for the most part, to emergencies and to those cases for which appropriate relief cannot, except with great difficulty, be procured from any other source. The statements upon this point are clearly borne out by the records of their expenditures.

The conclusions to be derived from the inquiry concerning the practice of charity-organization societies in giving relief are:

1. With the exception of possibly half a dozen societies, all but one of which are in the small cities, charity-organization societies provide immediate relief in urgent cases from funds in the hands of their agents. These funds are, first, "interim aid," "special relief," "emergency relief," "golden book," or other special funds maintained for that purpose; or, secondly, the general funds of the societies; or, thirdly, the money of the agents, which they advance with the knowledge that they will be reimbursed.

2. The reliance of many charity-organization societies upon their own general or special funds for relief is due, first, to the absence of relief societies; secondly, to the failure to secure coöperation with existing relief societies; thirdly, to the difficulty and delay of complying with the conditions upon which relief may be had from relief societies with which coöperation is incomplete.

Relief-giving was omitted from the work of the first charity-organization society for special reasons, but the conditions do not seem to have made it possible for the societies in the United States to follow the original plan with success. The effort to do so has undoubtedly led to some confusion of thought and waste of energy. As the prevailing methods are so widely at variance with what has generally been considered the standard, it would be wise to revise the principles of charity-organization societies upon this point to suit local conditions and prevent harmful misunderstanding.

Their real duty consists in impressing upon the minds of the public the fact that material relief is only the preliminary step in the process of regenerating the individual, a step that under some circumstances need not be taken at all; that constructive work which shall develop the individual beyond the need of alms is the supreme aim. It is in the emphasis of the latter rather than in the denial of the former function that the charity-organization society will fulfill its true mission.

That part of the inquiry which pertained to the relations that exist between charity-organization societies and relief societies shows that their coöperation involves the performance on the part of the relief societies of the following things: (1) report to the charity-organization society the names of the people aided; (2) refer applicants to the charity-organization society for investigation; (3) grant no relief upon the recommendation of other societies or individuals without the indorsement of the charity-organization society; (4) give immediate relief in emergencies upon the recommendation of the charity-organization society without reinvestigation; (5) be guided or controlled by the charity-organization society in the amount, kinds, and duration of relief to families or individuals recommended by it.

Nine societies reported that their relations with relief societies included all five of these points, by which they were given exclusive control of the work of the relief societies. Fourteen others reported that the relief societies observed only the first, fourth, and fifth, which gave them complete control of the relief to families recommended by them. Eight more were willing to coöperate to the extent of granting relief in emergencies before making an independent investigation.

Almost without exception the expressions of satisfaction with the existing relations became the more marked as the coöperation involved the larger number of the five points enumerated above, so that it would seem that exclusive control by the charity-organization society is the ideal relation. Exclusive control does not imply coercion, but a relation entered into willingly by both societies, the relief society reserving the right of independent judgment if necessary. The relation approaches

or involves exclusive control in those instances in which one society was organized specifically to supplement the work of the other, or when an older society was reorganized for that purpose. Instances of this kind are found in Baltimore, Washington, D. C.; Indianapolis, Malden, Mass.; Kansas City, and possibly others. This is further evidence that such a relationship is regarded as ideal.

When coöperation is complete there seems to be a tendency for the two societies to consolidate. This has occurred in at least two cities in which one individual has been made the executive officer of both societies. It is interesting to note that such a consolidation has taken place in Oakland, Cal., although the charter under which the charity-organization society was incorporated prohibits the giving of relief from its own funds.

It has been more difficult, it seems, to establish satisfactory arrangements with those relief societies that have great activity than with those of less energy. This is naturally the result of a dislike on the part of the relief society to place itself in what might appear to be a position of subordination to the charity-organization society. The most striking illustration of this is in New York city, in which both societies are very active. Formerly the charity-organization society was able to get relief for families recommended by it from the relief society without a reinvestigation and without losing control of the case. But for the last two or three years the relief society has refused to give relief except when the case has been fully surrendered to it. This has resulted in a good many instances in the organization of other sources of relief which can be controlled by the charity-organization society. The coöperation between the two societies there does not consist in a "division of labor" upon the same families, but in a division of families or cases, somewhat after the manner, it seems, of the division of traffic by competing railroad lines.

This inquiry has been one-sided, as it has been conducted from the standpoint of the charity-organization society only.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The writer proposes to prosecute the inquiry farther from the standpoint of the relief societies.

The conclusion reached, however, is that the most satisfactory relation between the societies is found when the relief society is passive, not because it must be, but because its confidence in the efficiency of the charity-organization society makes it willing to abide by its acts and follow its advice. Ordinarily it should serve simply as a repository of a relief fund to be expended as the charity-organization society should direct. Any extension of its activity should be along lines not covered by the charity-organization society, like the development of industrial relief, savings banks, etc.

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